



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Maryland*

*Thomas M. DiBiagio
United States Attorney*

*Vickie E. LeDuc
Public Information Officer*

*6625 United States Courthouse
101 West Lombard Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2692*

*410-209-4800
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462
410-209-4885
FAX 410-962-3091
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov*

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**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION CONTACT
VICKIE LEDUC, AUSA
(410) 209-4885**

FREDERICK DRUG DEALER RONALD PIRTLE SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON

Baltimore, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced today that Ronald a/k/a "Primo" a/k/a "Shabazz" Pirtle, age 27, of Frederick, Maryland, was sentenced yesterday by United States District Court Judge Marvin J. Garbis to serve a sentence of life in prison on federal drug conspiracy charges.

Following a trial in early September, a federal jury convicted Pirtle of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute cocaine base, commonly known as "crack cocaine," between May 2002 and July 2003. The jury issued special findings that Pirtle was responsible for the distribution of over 1.5 kilograms of crack cocaine, and was the head of a drug distribution organization.

Pirtle was indicted in July 2003 as part of a drug conspiracy in the Frederick and Hagerstown areas. The indictment was the result of an extensive investigation into drug dealing in those areas. Testimony during trial from cooperating co-conspirators, law enforcement officers and other witnesses, as well as recordings from a federal wiretap, recordings from telephone conversations between undercover detectives and Pirtle, and evidence seized in connection with search warrants

established that Pirtle began distributing crack cocaine and cocaine powder in the Frederick and Hagerstown areas in 2001. He recruited and managed a number of persons who transported the cocaine down from New York city, stored it in various residential locations in the area, and distributed it to users. Witnesses at trial testified that Pirtle also managed a drug distribution operation in West Virginia.

This case was investigated by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the Frederick County Sheriff's Office, the Frederick City Police Department, and the Washington County Narcotics Task Force, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Paul M. Tiao, Richard C. Kay and Christine Manuelian.